

Our Relations With the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



**Published by the Union Committee
of the Norwegian Synod**

Mankato, Minnesota, June 28, 1954

Dear Brethren of the Synodical Conference:

It is at the unanimous request of the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church that we are addressing this letter, explaining why it is that our synod deems it necessary to circularize all the clergy of our Synodical Conference, apprising them of our stand in the doctrinal matters now troubling our beloved Conference. Copies of our Union Committee's pamphlet, *OUR RELATIONS WITH THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD*, had already been sent to our own pastors and congregations, and (with the proper consent) to the pastors of the Wisconsin Synod, to all officials of the Synodical Conference bodies, as well as to the faculties of the theological seminaries and teachers' colleges within the Synodical Conference. But if there is to be a fair appraisal of our stand at the forthcoming convention of the Synodical Conference (Aug. 10-13, 1954), it is necessary that as many as possible of those who are to attend that convention have the facts presented to them betimes. And so the decision was made by our synod to circularize all the clergy within the Synodical Conference.

No one conversant with the doctrinal aberrations which have been held and taught in the American Lutheran Church will deny that the former synods of Ohio and Iowa have differed from us of the Synodical Conference in the doctrine of Objective Justification. While there are other matters in the Common Confession to which we take exception, we have used as an example that article of faith by which a church will stand or fall, the sinner's justification before God. We want an unconditioned Gospel.

If we are to remain faithful to the Scriptures and to our Lutheran Confessions we must abide in them also when they speak of rejecting error. As Luther used Titus 3, 10, to reject the false doctrines taught by a Zwingli and his followers, so must we. And as for our Confessions, they likewise speak unmistakable words on this score. When doctrines have been in dispute we must "state and declare plainly (categorically), purely, and clearly our faith and confession concerning each and every one of these in thesis and antithesis, i.e., the true doctrine and its opposite, in order that the foundation of divine truth might be manifest in all articles, and that all unlawful, doubtful, suspicious, and condemned doctrines, wherever and in whatever books they may be found, and whoever may have written them, or even now may be disposed to defend them, might be exposed (distinctly repudiated), so that every one may be faithfully warned against the errors, which are spread here and there in the writings of some theologians, and no one be misled in this matter by the reputation (authority) of any man." Formula of Concord, De Antithesi, Triglotta, page 857.

Let it not be said of us that we are mere disturbers of the peace, those who trouble Israel, when we again remind you of these things and plead with you that you abide by these Scripture-founded words of our Formula of Concord.

On behalf of the Union Committee of the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, carrying out the mandate of that synod's annual convention on June 26, 1954.

Acting Secretary of Union Committee, Norman A. Madson.

Have Our Fellowship Relations With the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Been Broken?

The old Norwegian Synod was a charter member of the Synodical Conference which was organized in 1872. It had, however, established fraternal relations with the Missouri Synod long before, in 1857, almost a century ago. Our "fathers" found in the theologians and pastors of the Missouri Synod kindred souls who shared with them their staunch loyalty to the inspired Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. This fellowship remained unbroken until 1917, when the Norwegian Synod majority merged with other Lutheran bodies on the basis of "Opgjør", a document which the Synodical Conference had to reject and against which it testified publicly and repeatedly until recent years.

When a small minority opposed the Norwegian "Merger," it was encouraged by the Missouri Synod to stand fast and to organize its own church body, as the spiritual heir of the Norwegian Synod. Through the 36 years since 1918, our Synod has stood solidly by the old, historic teachings of the conservative Lutheran Church, not only when it had the support of its "big brother," but also when many who were called brethren began to depart from the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Our Synod's members have to a very large extent affiliated with Missouri Synod churches in the many places where our own body was not represented, and "Missourians" again have affiliated with our churches and attended our school, Bethany Lutheran College. Thus there are many ties binding us together now, which did not exist in 1918, and it is only with the greatest regret that we contemplate any breach with the "Missourians" whose very name has become a synonym for uncompromising adherence to the word of God. But the fact remains that we in recent years have been "growing apart," and that the fellowship in the true faith which characterized the Synodical Conference for 75 years is being broken. It is the history of this trend away from "old Missouri's" position and toward "Unionism"—to put it in one word—which is to be outlined in this pamphlet.

In 1929, the Missouri Synod set aside the so-called "Chicago Theses," which had been prepared by a Committee made up of representatives of the Iowa and Buffalo Synods, and the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. It found many errors and defects in this quite detailed discussion of the controverted doctrines, and refused to adopt it as a

basis for union with former "Anti-Missourians." The 1929 Missouri Convention proceeded then to elect a new Committee, headed by Dr. Fr. Pieper, which was to draw up a statement covering the doctrines which had been in dispute among Lutherans in America, and which should present the doctrinal platform of the Missouri Synod. In 1932, the Missouri Synod adopted the statement prepared by this Committee, as a "brief Scriptural statement of the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod," (Proceedings, 1932, p. 155), and invited other Synods to subscribe to it also. The other Synods of the Synodical Conference expressed agreement with this "Brief Statement." But Lutherans outside of the Synodical Conference were not impressed by it and soon came with their own proposals for Lutheran Union. The American Lutheran Church issued invitations both to the ultra-liberal United Lutheran Church and to the Missouri Synod and other Synodical Conference churches to confer about establishing "pulpit- and altar-fellowship." And the ULC likewise urged all other Lutheran bodies to establish "closer relationships" on the basis of their common subscription to the Augsburg Confession. At its Cleveland Convention in 1935, the Missouri Synod responded favorably to these overtures and appointed a new "Committee on Lutheran Church Union to confer with other Lutheran bodies on Lutheran union with a view towards effecting true unity on the basis of the word of God and the Lutheran Confessions." (Proceedings, 1935, p. 221). Our Synod and the Wisconsin Synod had received similar invitations, but could not accept them on the ground that they were offered on a unionistic basis, with a view to a mere external union without the complete doctrinal unity required by the Word of God. The Cleveland Convention was informed of this action by the Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods and was reminded that it would be well for all the Synods of the Synodical Conference to act in unison on such a matter as establishing fraternal relations with other bodies. The Missouri Synod instructed its Committee, accordingly, to "confer with the other members of the Synodical Conference and keep them informed in this matter;" but said Committee ignored this part of its directives until after it had completed its work with the Union Committee of the American Lutheran Church.

The new Missouri Synod "Committee on Lutheran Church Union" lost no time in promoting union with the ALC. In the spring of 1938, after only six meetings with a Committee of the ALC, it presented to the Synodical Conference (without any prior "conferring" with the other synods of the Synodical Conference) a "Declaration" by the ALC commissioners regarding the ALC's attitude to the Brief Statement. This "Declaration" embodies practically everything that the ALC and its earlier constituent synods (Iowa, Buffalo and Ohio) had

ever contended for. The Missouri Synod's Union Committee recommended that this "Declaration" be adopted, although that action would have resulted in a complete emasculation of the Brief Statement and in a surrender of the doctrines and principles for which the Missouri Synod had contended for almost a century. The 1938 Convention was not ready to follow its Union Committee all the way, but did adopt the "Declaration" together with the "Brief Statement" on a sort of conditional basis, as a long step toward unity, (Proceedings 1938, p. 221 ff.) its "conditions" forming actually a third document, one which the ALC never adopted.

This action, being ambiguous and confused, satisfied nobody in reality. Our Synod as well as the Wisconsin Synod protested publicly against the "Declaration." To yoke it with the "Brief Statement" was too much like the forbidden plowing "with an ox and an ass together." (Deut. 22:10). In 1938 we circularised the clergy of the Synodical Conference with a critical analysis of the "Declaration" and with a statement on "Unity, Union and Unionism," in which we warned against continued negotiations with persistently erring church bodies, such as the ULC and ALC had proven to be. The Wisconsin Synod, likewise, in 1939, officially rejected the ALC "Declaration" and called upon the Missouri Synod to "suspend further negotiations with the ALC until that body had given up its unionistic position." (Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1939). In the meantime, conservatives in the Missouri Synod also protested in every way open to them against the liberal trends in their body, and in 1940 began publishing "The Confessional Lutheran," which since then has been an organ for true "Missourians" of the old school. It is significant that the leadership of the Missouri Synod has never recognized "The Confessional Lutheran" as a legitimate agency.

As a result of the determined opposition to the ALC "Declaration" within the Synodical Conference, the Missouri Synod in 1941 retraced its steps to a certain extent. It adopted resolutions calling for "one document" instead of the two mutually contradictory documents, the "Brief Statement" and the "Declaration." (Proceedings, 1941, p. 294 ff.) But it also resolved to continue negotiations with the ALC, brushing aside strong protests from the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods against such negotiations. In the meantime, the ALC had made it abundantly clear that it would not give up its fellowship relations with the ELC (the Norwegian Merger), the liberal Augustana Synod, the still more liberal Norwegian Free Church, and the Danish Lutheran Church. The ALC had also come to doctrinal agreement with the modernistic ULC on the basis of the so-called "Pittsburgh Agreement,"

which the Union Committee of the Missouri Synod could not accept. Furthermore the ALC at its Sandusky Convention, in 1938, in adopting the "Declaration," affirmed "that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental articles." This was a false principle which the Missouri Synod had always rejected. Thus the ALC had rebuffed the Missouri Synod at every turn, denying everything that the Missouri Synod had stood for from the beginning. Yet the Missouri Synod insisted on continuing negotiations with this openly and aggressively unionistic church body whose program it was to unite all Lutherans by holding out one hand to the "right-wing" Missouri Synod and the other hand to the "left-wing" ULC.

The Missouri Synod Union Committee had some difficulty in getting the ALC commissioners to meet for the purpose of drawing up one document to replace the "Declaration" and the "Brief Statement." At its 1944 Convention it could only report that progress was being made and that the new "single document" would be ready in the fall, (Proceedings, 1944, p. 248 ff.), in time for the ALC Convention. This new document, entitled "Doctrinal Affirmation," did not satisfy conservative Missourians, since it combined too many of the weaknesses of the "Declaration" with the strong points of the "Brief Statement." Nor did it please the ALC. At its 1944 Convention the ALC merely referred the "Affirmation" to the "conferences and districts of the ALC for study."

The liberal trend of the Missouri Synod leadership became manifest also in other matters at the 1944 convention. It adopted a definition of "prayer-fellowship," contrary to all its earlier pronouncements, which opened the door for a wide range of unionistic practices. The new definition read: "Joint prayer at intersynodical conferences, asking God for His guidance and blessing upon the deliberations and discussions of His Word, does not militate against the resolution of the Fort Wayne Convention, (1941) *provided such prayer does not imply denial of truth or support of error.*" (The Fort Wayne resolution forbade "pulpit, altar and prayer fellowship with the ALC" until all matters in controversy had been settled.) Thus it abandoned its traditional position that pulpit, altar and prayer fellowship with errorists *constitutes* in itself a "denial of truth and support of error" whether those concerned realize it or not.

The 1944 Convention also adopted a resolution with regard to the Boy Scout Movement, contrary to Missouri's earlier stand, and did this in the face of determined opposition, particularly from the Wisconsin Synod. It split with the Wisconsin Synod also in the matter of Army Chaplaincies, although the Missouri Synod had traditionally

opposed them as an undue mixing of Church and State. (See Pieper's Dogmatics, Vol. III, p. 416).

In 1945, the liberal, "left-wing" element in the Missouri Synod felt itself strong enough to publish a manifesto, called the "Chicago Statement," signed by 44 leading pastors and professors, which openly rejected the old Missourian stand on church unity and related subjects. Although there was wide opposition to the false principles expressed in the "Statement," nothing effective was done to discipline the errorists. In fact, many of the "signers"—there were eventually several hundred pastors and professors who subscribed to the "Statement,"—were rewarded by more influential offices in the church than they had held before.

At Fort Wayne, in 1941, "the name of the union committee significantly was changed to be the Committee on Doctrinal Unity in the Lutheran Church of America," and the Missouri Synod directed its Committee to continue negotiations "for the purpose of establishing doctrinal unity rather than aiming at organic union." (See Report of the Union Committee to the 1947 Convention, p. 376). But the ALC countered with definite statements, making it clear that it neither desired nor considered it necessary to arrive at "doctrinal unity" before declaring the way open for fellowship. It rejected the "Doctrinal Affirmation" in 1946, because this attempted amalgamation of the "Declaration" and the "Brief Statement" did not sufficiently safeguard the principles which the ALC had laid down in the "Declaration." Its Commissioners said that "the Declaration stood for a certain attitude given freedom under God and His word," and maintained "that the phrase 'doctrinal agreement' should not be used, because doctrinal agreement does not exist," (See Report quoted above, p. 379.) Hence, at Appleton, in 1946, the ALC adopted the following statement: "After years of effort in this direction, we despair of attaining Lutheran unity by way of additional doctrinal formulations and reformulations." (L.C. p. 380.) Its Committee also reiterated the stand taken by the ALC in 1938, that "it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental articles," and affirmed that the ALC's rejection of the "Doctrinal Affirmation" was based on an "allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God." It even called it "a threat to evangelical liberty of conscience" to make a unified statement of doctrine an absolute condition of fellowship. (See the ALC Committee's "Friendly Invitation" of March 4, 1947). (Proceedings, 1947, p. 381)

In the face of this public attitude on the part of the ALC, how could the Missouri Synod resolve to continue negotiations to bring

about "doctrinal agreement" or "doctrinal unity," which the ALC refused in advance even to consider? The ALC had rejected the "one document," the "Affirmation." Its members had in many cases revived the old accusation against Missouri of Calvinism, etc. . . . There was no basis whatever for believing that the ALC would change its position on these matters. And yet the "Missouri Synod Unity Committee" recommended that negotiations with the ALC should be continued, and the 1947 convention of the Missouri Synod decided to do so. This it did in the face also of renewed protests and warnings from the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods, such as the detailed criticisms of the "Affirmation" printed in the Norwegian Synod's Annual Report for 1946. We must recognize, then, that the Missouri Synod had to conform to the ALC platform for union, if negotiations were to be continued at all. But the "Doctrinal Affirmation" was dead, having been killed by the ALC. So a new start had to be made, now even more obviously than ever before on the ALC assumption that complete "doctrinal agreement" was neither necessary nor possible.

In 1950, shortly before the Convention of the Missouri Synod, its Committee was ready to present a new "union document," called the "Common Confession." Of all the doctrinal theses and statements and agreements produced in the last fifty years in the drive toward "Lutheran Union," this was, perhaps, the least pertinent to the real questions at issue. The "Common Confession" apparently aimed to state the doctrines on which all were agreed, rather than to face the points of doctrine and principle on which there had been disagreement for many years. It was no wonder, then, that the ALC adopted the "CC" at its convention in the fall of 1950 without debate, spending only a few minutes on a document which purported to be a settlement of all issues that had separated the ALC from the Missouri Synod for three generations. It realized that the principles for which it had contended since 1935, as expressed in the "Declaration," were sufficiently safeguarded in the "CC." It was, indeed, a foregone conclusion that this should be so, since the Missouri Synod had to adopt the ALC principles, in reality, *before* they even started negotiating, as has been indicated above.

There was little time for members of the Synodical Conference to study the "CC" before it came up for consideration at the Missouri Synod Convention in 1950. But many members of the Missouri as well as the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods voiced their objections to it, calling attention to its deficiencies and errors. Still the 1950 Convention adopted the "CC" as a settlement of all the points of doctrine on which there had been controversy in years past. The great majority

of the members of the Missouri Synod did not understand what had taken place. Many convinced themselves, in spite of the official resolution and the repeated statements of the Missouri Synod's officials, that this document, like the earlier 1938 "Declaration," had been accepted only as a step toward unity, or as a partial solution of the disagreements which had separated the two church bodies before. But the official action stands:

"Whereas, By the grace of God the Committee on Doctrinal Unity of the Synod and the Committee on Fellowship of the American Lutheran Church have jointly produced the document known as the Common Confession;—Resolved, That we rejoice and thank God that the Common Confession shows that agreement has been achieved in the doctrines treated by the two Committees;—" (Proc. 1950, p. 585)

The only matters which the Unity Committee was directed to consider together with the ALC Commissioners were such more "practical" questions as Unionism, the Lodge system, etc. . . It is not too strong language, then, to say that it was an insult to the memory of Dr. Walther, Dr. Pieper, and other champions of the whole truth in Christ Jesus, to claim that the superficial "Common Confession" constituted a settlement of all earlier controversies.

Since the Missouri Synod had adopted the "CC" under circumstances which were a direct challenge to the position our own Synod had taken from 1935 on, we had to consider the "CC" carefully. This was done in our Pastoral Conferences, and at our Convention in 1951, at which the following statement was adopted:

"Whereas the matter of the Common Confession has been placed before our Synod by our sister synod, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, for our consent to the course of action out-lined in the resolutions of the Missouri Synod,

"Be it resolved that we cannot give our consent to the Common Confession as a settlement of doctrinal differences between the Synodical Conference and the American Lutheran Church, for the following reasons:

"The Common Confession does not reject the errors of the American Lutheran Church. The document does not reject the false doctrine which has been expressed in the American Lutheran Church, that some parts of Scripture are not divinely inspired. John 10, 35; II Tim. 3, 16. On the contrary, when describing the origin of Scripture, the Common Confession uses the expression 'content and fitting word,' which is acceptable to many of those who also accept the false doctrine afore-mentioned.

Secondly, although the justification of all mankind in Christ (objective justification, Rom. 4, 5, Rom. 5, 18) has been openly denied within the American Lutheran Church, yet the Common Confession does not definitely state that God has declared all mankind to be righteous in Christ.

Thirdly, the error of the American Lutheran Church, that some people are converted to Christ while others are not, because the converted offer only a natural resistance, while others offer willful resistance—this error is not rejected in the Common Confession. Rom. 3, 22-23.

Fourthly, the Common Confession does not reject the error taught in the Ameri-

can Lutheran Church that God elected His people to eternal life in view of their foreseen faith. (Acts 13, 48.)

Fifthly, the Common Confession does not reject the error in the American Lutheran Church that the Means of Grace belong to the essence of the Holy Christian Church. Eph. 2, 19; Acts 2, 38; Matt. 26, 28. (The saints in heaven do not need the remission of sins.)

Sixthly, the Common Confession does not wholly reject such errors in the doctrine of the Last Things as the American Lutheran Church is tolerating, as, for example, that the Papacy may not be the Antichrist until the last day; (II Thess. 2, 8) that an unusually large number of Jews will be converted to Christ in the future, (Acts 7, 51; Rom. 9, 7) and that there will be some kind of millennial reign of Christ, (II Tim. 3, 1). These are examples, sufficient to show that the Common Confession is not a settlement of the differences.

"We therefore earnestly entreat our sister synod, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, to reconsider its adoption of the Common Confession and to reject it as a settlement of its doctrinal differences with the American Lutheran Church.

"We further entreat the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to discontinue negotiations with the American Lutheran Church except on the basis of a full acceptance of the 'Brief Statement.' (Titus 3:10.)

"Concern for the truth and for the continuation of our fellowship with the Missouri Synod on the doctrinal basis which we have enjoyed in the Synodical Conference through these many years moves us to draw up these resolutions. We desire our fellowship on the basis of right doctrine and practice to continue. God grant that the unity which once prevailed in the Synodical Conference may be restored by a steadfast adherence to the Scriptural principles that have united us."

The Wisconsin Synod took similar action and gave the "CC" much more thorough study at its Conferences and Conventions than the Missouri Synod had done. Protests became louder and stronger also within the Missouri Synod, and a small group of "Missourians" severed their connections with it in the fall of 1951.

In the meantime, the meetings of the Synodical Conference had become more and more indicative of the disunity which was developing within its ranks. It had to consider not only such doctrinal statements as the "Common Confession," but also a growing number of other matters on which the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference were at odds: The Chinese Term Question, the Boy Scout Question, Church and Ministry and the Chaplaincy Question, Unionism and Prayer Fellowship. It had to deal also with a whole series of charges against the Missouri Synod for unionistic practice in the field called "Cooperation in Externals." There was open disagreement as to the extent to which our church should cooperate with the National Lutheran Council and the Lutheran World Federation. In the work for our Armed Forces, the Missouri Synod joined hands with other Lutherans in ways which others regarded as definitely unionistic. All these matters were discussed at length in our Synod Report for 1949 under the title "Cooperation in Externals." Every effort that was made

to get these differences settled on a Scriptural basis, and in accordance with the traditional stand of the Synodical Conference, was blocked by the large majority of Missouri Synod members in the S. C. Conventions, against whom the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synod members were helpless. These Conventions, accordingly, accomplished nothing toward settling the differences in our own circles, but served rather to reveal the hopeless impasse to which we had come and to emphasize the fact that major surgery was required to "heal the hurt of our people."

Thus in 1952, at the Synodical Conference convention in St. Paul, both the Norwegian Synod and the Wisconsin Synod tried to persuade the Convention to take time for "a thorough discussion of the Common Confession" (Syn. Conf. Proceedings, 1952, 157 ff.). The Floor Committee recommended that this be done, and some time was perforce devoted to the situation created by the Missouri Synod's adoption of the CC. But the Floor Committee's analysis of the CC and their recommendations were unceremoniously set aside by the Missouri Synod majority, and a motion from the floor to "postpone all further action with reference to the CC until Part II had been completed and presented to the constituent Synods of the Synodical Conference and to the American Lutheran Church" was adopted. The representatives of the Wisconsin Synod who were present declared at the close of this most discouraging Synodical Conference Convention that they now considered themselves in "statu confessionis" over against the MS. The Synodical Conference was not functioning in the way its Constitution directed it to do in matters which threatened the doctrinal unity of the Conference. Hence the only avenue open to our Synod, as well as to others who opposed the CC, was direct appeal to the Missouri Synod in its tri-ennial convention. And such appeals had had little "appeal" to Missouri Synod conventions before.

However, in view of the strong protests against the "Common Confession," both from "Missourians" and from the other churches of the Synodical Conference, there were those who hoped that the Houston Convention of the Missouri Synod in 1953 would take steps to undo the damage which had been done by the actions of the 1950 Convention. Both our Synod and the Wisconsin Synod made it clear that any insistence on the "CC" as an actual settlement of the earlier doctrinal controversies would make it necessary for us to declare that the Missouri Synod had broken the bonds of fellowship in the Synodical Conference. In reality, the Synodical Conference had already lost its "raison d'être": mutual agreement in all Scripture teaching and joint defense against all error in doctrine. It was only a question whether

by the grace of God the original character of the Synodical Conference might yet be restored. But all such hopes were dashed to the ground when the Houston Convention adopted a motion reaffirming its 1950 resolution on the "Common Confession," which said: "We rejoice and thank God that the Common Confession shows that agreement has been achieved in the doctrines treated by the two Committees." (These doctrines included Inspiration of Scripture, Conversion and Election, the Church and Ministry, the Last Things, etc., as well as several doctrines on which there had been no controversy.)

But the Missouri Synod followed this by another resolution which complicated matters no end and created an intolerable situation. The 1950 Convention had instructed its Unity Committee to continue negotiations with the ALC Commissioners on topics not covered by the CC, such as Unionism, Lodgery, and other so-called "practical matters." The result of these negotiations was a "Common Confession Part II," which was much longer than Part I, but no more acceptable. This document had been published before the Houston Convention, which adopted the following resolutions with regard to it:

"Whereas, Part II of the Common Confession is intended as a supplement to Part I; therefore be it resolved, That for purposes of study Parts I and II of the Common Confession hereafter be treated as one document, with the understanding that Part II has not been adopted." (Proceedings, 1953, p. 528, resolution 7)

"Whereas, Part II of the Common Confession supplements and expands Part I; and

"Whereas, Future study of Part II of the Common Confession may clarify possible misunderstandings encountered in Part I; therefore be it

"Resolved, That this convention take no action on overtures pertaining to Part I of the Common Confession; and be it further

"Resolved, That we urge all pastors, teachers, and laymen to study privately, in conferences, and in adult Bible classes the *Scriptures* as referred to in the Common Confession in its present form, asking the Holy Ghost for our Savior's sake to enlighten us on these teachings through His gracious Word, encouraging the membership to report their Scriptural findings to our Synod's Unity Committee in sufficient time to have them included in their written report to the next convention." (Mo. Syn. Proceedings, 1953, p. 532 f., resolution 8.)

This was the answer to all the protests against the "Common Confession." Then the Houston Convention proceeded also to ask all parties concerned—the Synodical Conference, the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods, and its own protesting members—to wait until the next convention of the Missouri Synod in 1956 had had an opportunity to act on the whole document, Parts I and II, before taking any final action for or against the Common Confession.

Consider the situation. The Missouri Synod had adopted the Common Confession in 1950 as a "statement of agreement on these doctrines (the doctrines treated by the two committees) between us and

the American Lutheran Church." (Proc. 1950, p. 585). The ALC had adopted the same Confession in 1950 with great alacrity. Now Part II comes to us as a professed "clarification of the Common Confession, Part I." And we are asked to study it as constituting, together with Part I, one single document. But no man knows whether either the Missouri Synod or the ALC will adopt this Part II. We have here a strange reversal of the situation obtaining when the "Declaration" was promulgated. Then we were at first confronted with two documents which were accepted by both the MS and the ALC as evidence of doctrinal unity. But the attempt to make one single document out of these statements resulted in their death. Now we have one document, which has been adopted by both the MS and the ALC. Who can tell what effect the attempt at making twins out of the CC will have on it? It takes no prophet or prophet's son to foretell the reaction of the ALC toward any attempt at making honest Missouri Synod doctrine out of the "Common Confession." Reference could be made to one statement after the other (made within the last year or two by prominent ALC leaders) to show that they have not changed a particle in their attitude toward conservative Lutheranism, and that they regard the CC Part I as anything but a victory for true "Missourianism." (See appended excerpts from the writings of Dr. Lenski, one of the leading theologians of the ALC.)

But Part II does not meet our objections to Part I, any more than the painfully produced "Doctrinal Affirmation" met all our objections to the "Declaration." It has, indeed, been presented by the Missouri Synod leaders as a complete answer to all the objections raised against it by the Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods, as e.g. in its "A Fraternal Word" sent out broadcast by the Missouri Synod. But it is actually nothing of the sort, as will be shown later. Therefore the Wisconsin Synod in its Convention held after the Missouri Synod Convention in 1953 discussed a motion by its Union Committee declaring that the Missouri Synod "has disrupted the Synodical Conference and made it impossible for us to continue our affiliation with the Missouri Synod and our joint labors in the service of the Lord." This resolution was discussed at length at the Convention at Watertown, Wisconsin, but final action was deferred to a postponed meeting, held in Milwaukee in October, 1953. Here the debate centered largely on the question whether all relations with the Missouri Synod should be broken at once, or whether final action should be postponed to the next meeting of the Synodical Conference in the summer of 1954. The motion which was finally adopted reads as follows:

1. That we declare that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
 - a) by reaffirming its acceptance of the Common Confession as a "settlement

of past differences which in fact are not settled," (Wis. Proc. 1951, p. 146,) and

- b) by its persistent adherence to its unionistic practices (the Common Confession, joint prayer, scouting, chaplaincy, communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council, cooperation with unorthodox church bodies in matters clearly not in the field of externals; negotiating with lodges and Boy Scouts of America with the plea that this gives opportunity to bear witness, under the same plea taking part in unionistic religious programs and in the activities of unionistic church federations; negotiating for purposes of union with a church body whose official position it is that it is neither possible nor necessary to agree in all matters of doctrine and which contends for an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God) has brought about the present break in relations that is now threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuance of our affiliation with the sister Synod.
2. That we without delay make this declaration known to the President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, to the President of the Synodical Conference, and to the other Presidents of the constituent synods.
3. That we herewith approve the Protest agreed upon by our representatives immediately following the St. Paul convention of the Synodical Conference, 1952.
4. That we prevail upon the President of the Synodical Conference to arrange a program for the convention in 1954 that would devote all its regular sessions to a thorough consideration of our declaration in point 1 and of the doctrinal issues involved.
6. That, while during the period up to the next meeting of the Synodical Conference we, in view of President Behnken's offer, still anxiously and prayerfully await an indication that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will not persist in the present stand as set forth in point 1, we remain in a state of confession.

Gal. 6:1-2: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Romans 15:5-6: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As our Synod met before the Houston Convention, we could do no more than to re-affirm our 1951 resolutions and ask the Missouri Synod to note the fact that the CC did not fulfill the Missouri Synod's own directives, given in 1941, to its Union Committee. (See N. S. Report, p. 67-69, 1953.) We also voiced "our grave concern over the approaches of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to unionistic organizations like the Lutheran World Federation." (Report, p. 69.) Our "grave concern" was answered by the appearance of Bishop Lilje, representing the LWF, as an honored speaker at the Houston Convention and by

renewed propaganda for "cooperation in externals" with the Lutheran World Federation and the National Lutheran Council.

In the meantime, the ALC had continued its all-embracing unionistic program. It was not only ready to enter into an organic merger with other members of the American Lutheran Conference, but even joined the modernistic, socialistic World Council of Churches. At one time, in 1929, the Missouri Synod had directed its Union Committee to deal further with the ALC Committee only "provided the———move toward a closer union between the Ohio and Iowa synods, on the one hand, and the party of the Norwegian Opgjoer, on the other, be taken up first and adjusted according to the Word of God." This proviso was never carried out and now much more serious departures from the straight and narrow path on the part of the ALC are passed by without comment.

The ALC has also entered into definite plans for merger with the ELC and other still more liberal Lutheran bodies.

There is, of course, a possibility that both the ALC and the Missouri Synod will adopt Part II of the CC, although it will be a real problem whether to read Part I in the light of Part II or to read Part II in the light of Part I, wherever they may seem to differ. Thus it remains to examine Part II and see whether it actually improves upon Part I and answers the objections raised against it. We shall take up here only a few points mentioned in our 1951 statement, which was sent as our overture to the Missouri Synod at Houston. Other points are covered in pamphlets prepared by Wisconsin Synod leaders.

On the first point we say: "The Common Confession does not reject——the false doctrine which has been expressed in the American Lutheran Church, that some parts of Scripture are not divinely inspired, John 10, 35; II Tim. 3, 16. On the contrary, when describing the origin of Scripture, the Common Confession uses the expression, 'content and fitting word,' (which is acceptable to many of those who also accept the false doctrine aforementioned)." The issue has been whether all parts of Scripture, including purely historical, scientific, and other so-called secular matters, are to be classed as "inspired," or whether inspiration should properly be predicated only of the doctrinal and religious portions of Scripture. Neither the ALC nor the ULC was ready to adopt the "Brief Statement" on this point. Therefore the "Common Confession," as well as the earlier "Declaration," used language which could be interpreted as meaning something else than the "verbal inspiration" which traditionally has been taught in the orthodox church. Nor does the "Common Confession," Part II, help matters. It uses, indeed, the phrase "God's verbally inspired Word"

with reference to the Holy Scriptures, but in a setting which makes it possible still to limit inspiration to the doctrinal, spiritual portions of the Bible. Nowhere, either in Part I or Part II, is there any such unequivocal statement with regard to the inspiration of purely "secular" parts of Scripture as the Brief Statement contains. To settle this point properly, the Missouri Synod must require an unconditional and unqualified acceptance of the whole section in the "Brief Statement" which deals with Scripture.

In the document entitled "A Fraternal Word," prepared by Missouri Synod leaders, answering the Wisconsin Synod's objections to the CC, there is a failure to face our objections honestly which is something less than "fraternal." It quotes just enough of the wording of the Wisconsin Synod's objections and the CC, Parts I and II, to make it appear as though the three documents actually say the same thing. The wording of the CC Part I, as well as of Part II, might be acceptable enough, if we were dealing with people who in their published writings showed that they held the same view of Scripture in its every part as we and all orthodox Lutherans ever have held. But since this is not the case, we cannot be too insistent on wording the paragraph concerning Scripture in such a way as to exclude all error.

The same stricture applies to the use the "Fraternal Word" makes of other statements in the Wisconsin Synod's overture and in the CC Parts I and II. We, like the Wisconsin Synod, objected to the omission from the CC of any statement covering the doctrine of "objective justification," or the "justification of the whole world." We stated in our Overture: "Although the justification of all mankind in Christ (objective justification, Rom. 5, 18) has been openly denied within the American Lutheran Church, yet the Common Confession does not definitely state that God has declared all mankind to be righteous in Christ." Here the "Fraternal Word" makes use of phrases taken from the CC which in their connection speak of universal redemption by Christ, of His atonement wrought for all men. The ALC has always taught that Christ died for all and that forgiveness of sin has been provided for all. The disagreement has been on the question whether we could say also, on the basis of the passage in Romans referred to above, that God has declared all men just in Christ, that He has "justified" them, declared them not guilty. Those who are inclined to make man's faith a necessary prerequisite to God's justifying act or decree inveigh vehemently against the doctrine called "objective justification," as e.g. Dr. Lenski does in his commentary on Romans 1, 17; 4, 5; 5, 18; etc. To him, there is no justification until man believes the Gospel. But Paul's teaching is that God declares all men righteous in Christ, and it is this which man

is to believe. The one view makes faith in reality a cause of man's justification, or at least its necessary prerequisite; the other view makes faith a consequence of objective justification, something that follows it, or merely the empty hand which reaches out to accept and use the proffered gift of God. (See the quotations from Dr. Lenski's article in the appendix).

We shall here mention just one more point, as it affords a good example of the manner in which the MS in its "Fraternal Word" answers the objections of the Wisconsin Synod. The Wisconsin Synod had objected to "The omission of any reference to the doctrine of Sunday." To this the MS answers: "It is public doctrine in the American Lutheran Church that the observance of Sunday does not rest on a command of God."

Now it has always been true of the ALC that it recognized the doctrine concerning Sunday or the Sabbath as found in our Lutheran Confessions to be the correct doctrine. But it has also always contended for the right to keep in its fellowship those who followed sectarian teachings on the Sabbath. This has always been the issue between MS and the ALC, then, whether to regard false teaching concerning the Sabbath as a serious error which cannot be tolerated in the true Lutheran Church. The "Fraternal Word," like the "Declaration" before it, evades this issue and, in effect, bears false testimony by giving the impression there is full agreement on this point where there is no real agreement. Cf. e.g. the Resolutions re the "Doctrinal Affirmation" adopted by the Dakota District of the ALC, in May, 1946, at their Convention in Aberdeen, South Dakota: "We are not ready to agree with the statement in paragraph 48 which includes the doctrines of Sunday and the Antichrist among those doctrines which are not classed as 'open questions';" and by the Central Dakota Conference of the same District: "We would like to know what Scriptural proof could be quoted for the support of the statement that 'God has abrogated the Sabbath and all Holy Days, etc.' (abgeschafft) and not the other nine commandments."

We believe that this is enough in any case to justify the statement that there is no longer any real unity between our Synod and the Missouri Synod. We have brought protest after protest against one false doctrine or principle after the other, through the last 25 years, but have no evidence that our protests have been heeded. What we are to do under these circumstances is discussed in the following papers. Let it suffice to say here: We will get nowhere if we ignore the facts. And the facts are that the MS *has* broken its bonds of fellowship with us by its persistent adherence to a course which we have

with all justice condemned, and by its growing tolerance of unionistic activities and unionistic "brethren." This must be the answer to the question at the head of this paper.

APPENDIX

DR. R. C. H. LENSKI on "*Objective Justification*"
(Comments by Geo. O. Lillegard)

On Rom. 1, 17. "This saving revelation never occurs except 'ek pisteos.' When the heart hardens itself, prevents faith from being kindled, all remains dark, *no revelation takes place, no righteousness is pronounced by God*, no salvation is obtained, no life enters." (p. 82)

G.O.L.: The underlined phrases are contrary to John 1:5: "The light shineth in darkness;" John 1:9: "That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," etc.; Rom. 5:8 ff: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The saving revelation takes place whether men believe or not; but it does not profit any man until he believes. Similarly, we are "justified," pronounced righteous, by the blood shed by Christ for sinners, whether we believe it or not; but it does not profit us until we repent and believe.

Dr. Lenski continues: "Does Paul attribute too much to faith when he writes that God's saving Gospel righteousness is revealed 'out of faith,' that our justification comes 'out of faith, is due to faith,' yea, as he says elsewhere, that 'faith' itself is reckoned unto us for righteousness, and when our fathers similarly declared that we are elected 'in view of faith?' All misgivings disappear when we have the Scriptural conception of faith." (p. 83)

G.O.L.: He continues to give a definition of faith which excludes synergism; but this does not meet the objection that he here is giving faith a wrong place, as if either our *justification* or our *election* were carried out only by virtue of, or in view of, our faith.

Dr. Lenski argues correctly enough with regard to "universal reconciliation, or atonement." He says: (p. 84, l.c.) "This reconciliation embraced the whole world of sinners and was thus 'without faith, prior to and apart from faith.' When Christ died on the cross He cried: 'It has been finished!' (i.e. and stands so forever). Then and there the whole world of men was reconciled to God by Christ. The resurrection of Christ only corroborated the tremendous fact of the world's reconciliation."

G.O.L.: Having admitted this much, one might think that Lenski would admit also that there is a "universal justification of the whole world." He admits the logic of this, but concludes: (Lenski) "Yet to use the word 'justification' in this way is not a gain, for it is liable (sic) to confuse the ordinary man." But thus he ignores the Scripture use of the term in Rom. 4:5, 5:16-19. There we are told, not only that we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, but also that God "justifieth *the ungodly*;" that "the free gift came upon *all men* unto justification of life;" and that "as by one man's disobedience *many* were made *sinners*; so by the obedience of one shall *many* be made *righteous*." (The "many" here is "all men," as is evident from the context.)

On Rom. 4:5, Dr. Lenski says: "It is the height of paradox when God 'declares

the ungodly righteous.'-----The article is generic, yet not as indicating every ungodly one in the world, but every ungodly one whom God declares righteous by reckoning his faith for righteousness."

G.O.L.: Paul says God "justifies the ungodly," without any limitation of any kind. It is this which "ungodly" people are to believe. Then, when they believe it, they are no longer counted as ungodly, but as righteous. But Lenski denies this, saying: "It---does not say that the ungodly one was declared righteous 'before faith and independent of faith.'-----Our certainty of justification is sometimes discussed at this point. It cannot rest on the fact of my being an ungodly one. I cannot say: 'I am ungodly, but God justifies the ungodly; therefore I am certain he justifies also me.'-----I must ever say: 'I believe, therefore am I justified.'" (p. 294 f.)

If this does not make a saving work out of "faith," instead of merely the empty hand grasping God's gift to us, I do not know how one can express that heresy better.

On Rom. 5:16, Dr. L. says: "The fact that the condemnatory verdict damned all men is beyond question after considering v. 12-15. The fact that the justifying verdict does *not* justify all men ought to be equally beyond question in view of v. 17 and of all that Paul has said regarding justification *by faith alone*. In spite of this, 'dikaioma' is thought to imply a world absolution in the sense of the personal forgiveness of sins to every individual man in the world.---All men were indeed reconciled to God, and it is possible to call this universal or world justification, but never in the sense of absolving every individual sinner of his sins before faith and without faith, never in the sense of abolishing the personal justification which God pronounces only the instant he kindles faith." p. 373 f.) (But this is *subjective* justification. G.O.L.)

G.O.L.: Note the correspondence between this and the CC on "universal justification," as having only the sense of a "universal reconciliation."

Dr. Lenski comes with another serious attack on orthodox Bible doctrine in connection with his discussion of Rom. 5:10 on "Reconciliation." He says:--"the verb 'were reconciled to God'---is misinterpreted when 'enemies' are understood to be people to whom God is an enemy and not people who are enemies to God. Reconciliation is then taken to mean that God gave up *His* enmity toward us, whereas it signifies that through Christ's death God changed *our* status.---God always loved the world (John 3:16). It was this love which dated from all eternity that caused Him to give His Son into death for the ungodly world (v. 8). God needed no reconciliation, nothing to change Him, for God is love---why should *He* change? The whole trouble was with *us*, with what we had made ourselves (enemies), with the state into which we had placed ourselves (sin, godlessness)."

This is a direct contradiction of what orthodox Lutherans have ever taught. See, e.g. Dr. Pieper's *Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 348: "Rom. 5:10: 'We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.' When Christ died, God became reconciled. As Christ's death lies in the past, so also our reconciliation is an accomplished fact. II Cor. 5:19---The 'katallassein' of Rom. 5:10 and II Cor. 5:19 does not refer---let this fact be noted---to any change that occurs in men, but describes an occurrence in the heart of God."

Study the whole section in Dr. Pieper's *Dogmatics* on "The Vicarious Satisfaction," as well as Lenski on the passages concerned, to get the complete picture of the wide gulf that separates them from each other.

What Should Be Our Attitude Towards, and Our Relationship With, Those Who Persist in an Unscriptural Course?

Our topic reads: "Those who persist in an unscriptural course." This means that they have been duly admonished, their errors having been pointed out to them from the Word of God. And they have not heeded the admonition, but have continued in the same wrong course.

"An unscriptural course" may be one either in doctrine, or in life and practice.

The principles which we set forth from the Word of God in these matters apply whether it is an individual, a group of individuals, or an entire congregation or church body (Synod), which is guilty of persisting in a sinful course.

Scripture answers our question. We shall not have church fellowship with them, and in case we have been in church fellowship with them, we shall break with them.

God demands this of us:

I. He commands us to confess the pure doctrine only, and to adorn the pure doctrine with a godly life.

"Hallowed be Thy Name." We shall hallow God's Name by pure teaching and holy living, as Luther teaches us in keeping with the Scriptures.

If false teaching or ungodly living should be tolerated among us (as it would be if we remained in fellowship indefinitely with those who persist in a sinful course), then we would become partakers in the wrong. "Neither be partaker of other men's sins; keep thyself pure." I Tim. 5,22. "To whom we gave place by subjection no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Gal. 2,5. Also Gal. 2, 11-14; I Tim. 6, 13, 14, 20a; II Tim. 1, 13; Titus 1, 9; 1. Pet. 4, 11a, Phil. 1, 27b; 1 Cor. 1, 10; John 8, 31.

Note: "A church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline, Acts 20, 30; 1 Tim. 1, 3." (Brief Statement 29).

II. God commands the church to break fellowship with those who adhere to false doctrine or ungodly life.

Here we want to place the First Commandment at the head. False doctrine is disobedience to God. Worshipping the true God means separation from all false doctrines.

And ungodly life is following the devil and not God. If we would follow God, we must break with the devil.

In the field of doctrine God commands us as follows: Matt. 7, 15; Rom. 16, 17, 18; 2 John 10, 11; Titus 3, 10.

And in the matter of ungodly life, God says: "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Cor. 5, 13.) Cf. Matth. 18, 17. To continue fellowship with those who persist in error would be disobedience to God. It would be setting ourselves up as masters, instead of letting God be our Master.

God also warns us against halting between two opinions, against being unwilling to take a stand for what is right. I Kings 18, 21. Nor must we let ourselves be deceived by the fine appearance and manners of those who persist in an unscriptural course. Gal. 3, 1-3. Christ speaks of "the sheep's clothing" of the false teachers, Matth. 7, 15.

III. God shows us, by examples from Scripture, that it is our duty to withdraw from those who advocate and tolerate error: Abraham left the idolatry of his father's house. Ezra and Nehemiah refused to build the temple together with the Samaritans. Church history also provides illustrations of this. Luther at Marburg in 1529. The Lutheran Confessions say: "To dissent from the agreement of so many nations and to be called schismatics is a grave matter. But divine authority commands all not to be allies and defenders of impiety and unjust cruelty." (Conc. Triglot, 517.). The early history of the Missouri Synod (Cf. article in Northwestern Lutheran, Jan. 24, 1954, p. 23-24.) The "Lutheran Witness" in former years had on its masthead the following quotation from the Book of Concord: "It is, in truth, no easy matter to be separate from so many people and to teach a different doctrine; *but here is God's command*, instructing every one to beware of joining hands with those who teach error."

Conclusions:

1. If we should be unwilling to break with those who persist in a sinful course, it would mean loss of the pure doctrine and confession. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Gal. 5, 9)

2. Such unionism leads to doctrinal indifference and the breakdown of doctrinal discipline. But to lose the pure doctrine would be to suffer the greatest loss which Christians can sustain.

3. To compromise with error deliberately and wittingly would be a wilful sin which would militate against faith and a good conscience. Witness the terrors of conscience sustained by such as have made that mistake. Cf. Mo. Syn. Mich. District, 1894, p. 35 ff. and Pieper's "Christian Dogmatics," III, pp. 425-427.

4. Those who follow another doctrine must bear the blame for breaking the fellowship, not those who abide by the truth.

5. We must not be frightened from the right course in these matters

by the accusation that some will raise against us, that we are loveless and stubborn. Neither must we invent some excuse for disobedience, such as expediency, or so-called "furthering the cause of the Kingdom," in order to remain in fellowship with those who follow error. Compare the words of Samuel to Saul: "To obey is better than sacrifice." (I Sam. 15, 22.)

6. It belongs to the right use of the doctrine of the church that we adhere to the church which teaches the word of God in all its purity, and that we avoid fellowship with false churches and organizations which profess a religion that is false. Cf. Catechism of the Missouri Synod, q. 186.